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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/084,313	02/28/2002	Michael D. D. Clarke	7099.1626-00	6840

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EXAMINER

HERNANDEZ, OLGA

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

2144

DATE MAILED: 04/15/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

# Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/084,313

Applicant(s)

CLARKE ET AL.

Examiner

Olga Hernandez

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --  
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

## Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 2/24/05
- 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

## Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-41 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 41 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-40 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☒ Claim(s) 1-41 are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

## Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 28 February 2002 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

## Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

## Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## **DETAILED ACTION**

### ***Response to Arguments***

Applicant's arguments have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101***

35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

Claims 1-40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter.

If the broadest reasonable interpretation of the claimed invention as a whole encompasses a human being, then a rejection under 35 U.S.C. 101 must be made indicating that the claimed invention is directed to nonstatutory subject matter.

Apart from the utility requirement of 35 U.S.C. 101, usefulness under the patent eligibility standard requires significant functionality to be present to satisfy the useful result aspect of the practical application requirement. See *Arrhythmia*, 958 F.2d at 1057, 22 USPQ2d at 1036. Merely claiming nonfunctional descriptive material stored in a computer- readable medium does not make the invention eligible for patenting. For example, a claim directed to a word processing file stored on a disk may satisfy the utility requirement of 35 U.S.C. 101 since the information stored may have some "real world" value. However, the mere fact that the claim may satisfy the utility requirement of 35 U.S.C. 101 does not mean that a useful result is achieved under the practical

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application requirement. The claimed invention as a whole must produce a "useful, concrete and tangible" result to have a practical application.

The subject matter courts have found to be outside the four statutory categories of invention are limited to abstract ideas, laws of nature and natural phenomena. While this is easily stated, determining whether an applicant is seeking to patent an abstract idea, a law of nature or a natural phenomenon has proven to be challenging. These three exclusions recognize that subject matter that is not a practical application or use of an idea, a law of nature or a natural phenomenon is not patentable. See, e.g., *Rubber-Tip Pencil Co. v. Howard*, 87 U.S. (20 Wall.) 498, 507 (1874) ("idea of itself is not patentable, but a new device by which it may be made practically useful is"); *Mackay Radio & Telegraph Co. v. Radio Corp. of America*, 306 U.S. 86, 94, 40 USPQ 199, 202 (1939) ("While a scientific truth, or the mathematical expression of it, is not patentable invention, a novel and useful structure created with the aid of knowledge of scientific truth may be."); *Warmerdam*, 33 F.3d at 1360, 31 USPQ2d at 1759 ("steps of locating' a medial axis, and 'creating' a bubble hierarchy . . . describe nothing more than the manipulation of basic mathematical constructs, the paradigmatic abstract idea' "). Courts have expressed a concern over "preemption" of ideas, laws of nature or natural phenomena. The concern over preemption was expressed as early as 1852. See *Le Roy v. Tatham*, 55 U.S. 156, 175 (1852) ("A principle, in the abstract, is a fundamental truth; an original cause; a motive; these cannot be patented, as no one can claim in either of them an exclusive right."); *Funk Brothers Seed Co. v. Kalo Inoculant Co.*, 333 U.S. 127, 132, 76 USPQ 280, 282 (1948) (combination of six species of bacteria held to

be nonstatutory subject matter). The concern over preemption serves to bolster and justify the prohibition against the patenting of such subject matter. In fact, such concerns are only relevant to claiming a scientific truth or principle. Thus, a claim to an "abstract idea" is nonstatutory because it does not represent a practical application of the idea, not because it would preempt the idea.

Claims to computer-related inventions that are clearly nonstatutory fall into the same general categories as nonstatutory claims in other arts, namely natural phenomena such as magnetism, and abstract ideas or laws of nature which constitute "descriptive material."

Abstract ideas, *Warmerdam*, 33 F.3d at 1360, 31 USPQ2d at 1759, or the mere manipulation of abstract ideas, *Schrader*, 22 F.3d at 292-93, 30 USPQ2d at 1457-58, are not patentable. Descriptive material can be characterized as either "functional descriptive material" or "nonfunctional descriptive material." In this context, "functional descriptive material" consists of data structures and computer programs which impart functionality when employed as a computer component. (The definition of "data structure" is "a physical or logical relationship among data elements, designed to support specific data manipulation functions." *The New IEEE Standard Dictionary of Electrical and Electronics Terms* 308 (5th ed. 1993).) "Nonfunctional descriptive material" includes but is not limited to music, literary works and a compilation or mere arrangement of data.

Both types of "descriptive material" are nonstatutory when claimed as descriptive material per se. *Warmerdam*, 33 F.3d at 1360, 31 USPQ2d at 1759. When functional

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descriptive material is recorded on some computer-readable medium it becomes structurally and functionally interrelated to the medium and will be statutory in most cases since use of technology permits the function of the descriptive material to be realized.

Compare *In re Lowry*, 32 F.3d 1579, 1583-84, 32 USPQ2d 1031, 1035 (Fed. Cir. 1994) (claim to data structure stored on a computer readable medium that increases computer efficiency held statutory) and *Warmerdam*, 33 F.3d at 1360-61, 31 USPQ2d at 1759 (claim to computer having a specific data structure stored in memory held statutory product-by-process claim) with *Warmerdam*, 33 F.3d at 1361, 31 USPQ2d at 1760 (claim to a data structure per se held nonstatutory). When nonfunctional descriptive material is recorded on some computer-readable medium, it is not statutory since no requisite functionality is present to satisfy the practical application requirement.

Merely claiming nonfunctional descriptive material stored in a computer-readable medium does not make it statutory. Such a result would exalt form over substance. In *re Sarkar*, 588 F.2d 1330, 1333, 200 USPQ 132, 137 (CCPA 1978) ("[E]ach invention must be evaluated as claimed; yet semantogenic considerations preclude a determination based solely on words appearing in the claims. In the final analysis under 101, the claimed invention, as a whole, must be evaluated for what it is.") (quoted with approval in *Abele*, 684 F.2d at 907, 214 USPQ at 687). See also *In re Johnson*, 589 F.2d 1070, 1077, 200 USPQ 199, 206 (CCPA 1978) ("form of the claim is often an exercise in drafting").

Thus, nonstatutory music is not a computer component and it does not become statutory by merely recording it on a compact disk. Protection for this type of work is provided under the copyright law.

Claims to processes that do nothing more than solve mathematical problems or manipulate abstract ideas or concepts are more complex to analyze and are addressed below. If the "acts" of a claimed process manipulate only numbers, abstract concepts or ideas, or signals representing any of the foregoing, the acts are not being applied to appropriate subject matter. Schrader, 22 F.3d at 294-95, 30 USPQ2d at 1458-59. Thus, a process consisting solely of mathematical operations, i.e., converting one set of numbers into another set of numbers, does not manipulate appropriate subject matter and thus cannot constitute a statutory process.

### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Pauly (6,571,171) in view of Onken et al (6,163,744), further in view of Tang et al (6,134,500).

As per claim 1, 15, Pauly teaches:

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- generating an aircraft routing proposal based on information describing a possible flight of an aircraft (abstract);
- determining a proposed flight assignment for the aircraft based on the generated aircraft routing proposal and complying with the information describing the possible flight of the aircraft (abstract).

Pauly does not teach:

- determining whether the proposed flight assignment meets a decision criterion describing requirements for aircraft routing;
- if the decision criterion is unmet, optimizing the proposed flight assignment such that the proposed flight assignment meets the decision criterion; and
- generating a flight assignment plan using the proposed flight assignment that meets the decision.

However, Onken teaches:

- determining whether the proposed flight assignment meets a decision criterion describing requirements for aircraft routing (column 3, lines 22-37);
- if the decision criterion is unmet, optimizing the proposed flight assignment such that the proposed flight assignment meets the decision criterion (column 3, lines 30-37); and
- generating a flight assignment plan using the proposed flight assignment that meets the decision (column 4, lines 57-59).



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Neither Pauly nor Onken teaches the determination of a proposed pre-flight assignment. However, Tang teaches it in column 1, lines 58-67.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the aforementioned inventions in order to automatically correct a change in the flight-relevant parameters and avoid any incident.

As per claims 5 and 19, both Pauly and Onken teach the information describing the possible flight of the aircraft includes at least one of flight information, aircraft information and maintenance information. Pauly (column 3) and Onken (abstract).

As per claims 6 and 20, Onken teaches the flight information includes a destination (column 5, lines 36-55).

As per claims 7, 8, 21 and 22, it would have been obvious (requested by FAX to enhance safety) that the navigation/maintenance data in any aircraft includes current location, remaining flight time, ready time, start time, end time and other kind of information (Onken, column 4, lines 50-65).

As per claims 9 and 23, Onken teaches when approaching the airport, the pilot is instructed to fly a particular heading that deviates from the programmed flight path (column 5, lines i3-25). It would have been obvious that any kind of communication regarding the flight is done by a network, because a network is a communication means that comprises at least two nodes (transmitter and receiver).

Claims 10-13, 24727 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Pauly (6,571,171) in view of Onken et al (6,163,744) as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Nobe et al (5,657,231).

As per claims 10 and 24, neither Pauly nor Onken teach the use of a shortest path algorithm. However, Nobe teaches it in column 2, lines 6-9. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the aforementioned inventions in order to guide the vehicle to the destination on the basis of the automatically set shortest route so reducing the expenses.

As per claims 11, 12, 13, 25, 26 and 27, Nobe teaches the Dijkstra algorithm in column 2, lines 6-9. Further, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to use/implement any kind of algorithm/means that performs the same function in order to improve the response and accuracy of the proposed route. In re Karlson, 136 USPQ 184.

Claims 14 and 28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Pauly (6,571,171) in view of Onken et al (6,163,744) as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Zweben et al (6,216,109).

As per claims 14 and 28, neither Pauly nor Onken teach the branch and bound method. However, Zweben teaches it in column 4, lines 1-3. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the aforementioned inventions in order to satisfy certain conditions during the scheduled set of activities.

Claims 29, 32, 34, 35, 36 and 38 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Aslin (4,943,919) in view of Onken et al (6,163,744).

As per claims 29 and 35, Aslin teaches receiving information describing a possible flight of an aircraft, wherein the information includes maintenance and operational constraints (the LRU fault data is considered to be the operational constraint) (abstract); generating a flight network from the received information (column 11, figures 1 and 2); modeling at least one of the maintenance and operational constraints (column 12, lines 33-49).

Aslin does not teach determining an aircraft routing proposal for the aircraft that satisfies the received information. However, Onken teaches it in column 4, lines 47-55. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the aforementioned inventions in order to automatically correct a change in the flight-relevant parameters and avoid any incident.

As per claims 32 and 38, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art that any maintenance or operational constraint provide a flying time constraint, because no one would take a chance to operate an aircraft without verifying that it is in conditions to flight. So, it takes time to verify that everything is in order to avoid the possibility of an accident.

As per claim 34, Aslin teaches generating an occurrence of scheduled maintenance check constraint (column 1, lines 20-25).

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Olga Hernandez whose telephone number is 571-272-7144. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon-Thu 7:30am-6:00pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, William Cuchlinski can be reached on 571-272-3925. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'O. Hernandez', written in a cursive style.

Olga Hernandez  
Examiner  
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